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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TIP INTERIM ASSESSMENT MEDIA REACTION FOCUSES ON "MODEST" PROGRESS IN GREECE

REF A: STATE 15286 and previous

REF B: ATHENS 328

1. SUMMARY: Post held an on-the-record February 2 press conference for the TIP Interim Assessment release, which resulted in eight TIP articles published February 2 through February 11. The event not only provided post the opportunity to discuss TIP and the Assessment with journalists, but also allowed us to emphasize the important role the media plays in informing the public about the issue. Seven balanced, factual articles were published shortly after the press conference and one paper published a lengthy, favorable account of the presentation with four additional well-researched TIP pieces. All articles focused on the "modest" or "moderate" progress cited during the interim period, with one article characterizing the report as a negative assessment of Greece's overall efforts during the period. END SUMMARY.

2. Accompanying the February 2 release of the TIP Interim Assessment, post held a press conference for eleven diplomatic and political reporters. The journalists asked wide-ranging questions to gauge the U.S. evaluation of TIP efforts in Greece, the latest TIP trends, how trafficking conviction rates in Greece compare to U.S. rates, and what improvements could be made in Greece.

3. The most noteworthy outcome of the press outreach was a thoughtful two-page spread of TIP articles in the Saturday, February 11 edition of the daily *Apogevmatini*. With a photo of a Chinese family hiding the face of their former sex slave daughter instead of the shots of scantily-clad women that typically accompany Greek TIP articles, reporter Marianna Androutsou covered the Interim Assessment, sexual exploitation and selling of children, child sex tourism, and recent TIP progress in Greece. One article praises the moderation and realism of the assessment and the press conference, as well as the "explicit call for more action in fighting the plague" of TIP. The author rhetorically questions why Greece has such strict penalties for TIP when perpetrators are not severely punished, even when the police successfully dismantle TIP networks. In a separate, lengthy opinion piece, she describes the differences between the American and European justice systems, calling the "severe punishment" meted out in the U.S. as "out of the question" for Greek and European justice still "burdened by the political and philosophical dilemmas" of the Enlightenment. She continues by questioning whether Greeks understand "the importance of public awareness and collective responsibility in connection with trafficking," calling it "tragic" and "unbelievably naive" to see combating TIP as the exclusive duty of the police and NGOs. A supporting article comprehensively describes global child prostitution, and calls for a strategy of public awareness campaigns. Another describes how western countries "close their eyes" to sex tourism in Thailand. Yet another article describes the recent international TIP conference held in Athens (Ref B), as well as the common declaration signed by South Eastern European Justice Ministers on February 8 to strengthen TIP action and enhance transborder cooperation to combat organized crime.

4. The independent *Kathimerini* carried a substantial article Feb 3 under the title "The U.S. says 'Yes, but' on human trafficking," saying "some progressive steps have been made by the GoG, but they were found, however, to be small by the U.S. services." *Kathimerini* explained the tier rating mechanism and noted that Greece has been rated for two consecutive years as a Tier Two Watch List country, a rating the paper described as "not at all honorary." The article continued, "the competent U.S. Embassy officer ... noted that lots of work need to be done in particular regarding victim protection. She stressed that from the research regularly conducted by the Embassy, there is good cooperation with the GoG, the competent Ministries and the NGOs working on trafficking. However, there is need for better cooperation in order to create a more effective system, and more efforts to sensitize the Greek public opinion on the issue." The article also mentioned that positive elements highlighted in the report, including the signing last November of a Memorandum of Cooperation between the government and 12 NGOs and the near-completion of a

protocol of cooperation with Albania on child repatriation."

15. The Feb 3 pro-opposition PASOK daily To Vima article was titled "U.S. report critical for Greece," and focused on needed improvements in victim protection and more penalties to traffickers. Left-of-center pro-PASOK Ethnos, pro-ND Eleftheros Typos and leftist pro-PASOK Eleftherotypia carried short articles on Feb 3 highlighting items still to be completed as well as positive developments noted in the assessment. The long ANA Daily News Bulletin article quoted much of the assessment. Besides a comprehensive summary of the assessment, Agency France Presse on Feb 2 also included background information on the November visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on child exploitation and his criticism of Greece for failing to track down the 500 children who "disappeared" from an Athens orphanage between 1998 and 2003. The ANA reported, "An Embassy official stressed that there was good and long-lasting cooperation with Greek authorities and individual ministries on (TIP). She also stressed that Greek law has harsh penalties for human-trafficking offences but there were too few convictions."

16. COMMENT: The significant international TIP conference and series of press articles on TIP just prior to the assessment's release likely contributed to the media interest in this mid-term report. While most of the resulting articles were factual and relatively brief, the press event reinforced the Embassy's desire for continued cooperation with the media on TIP and other issues and set the groundwork for publicity of the much-anticipated announcement of Greece's tier-ranking in the June 1 annual TIP report.

End Cable Text